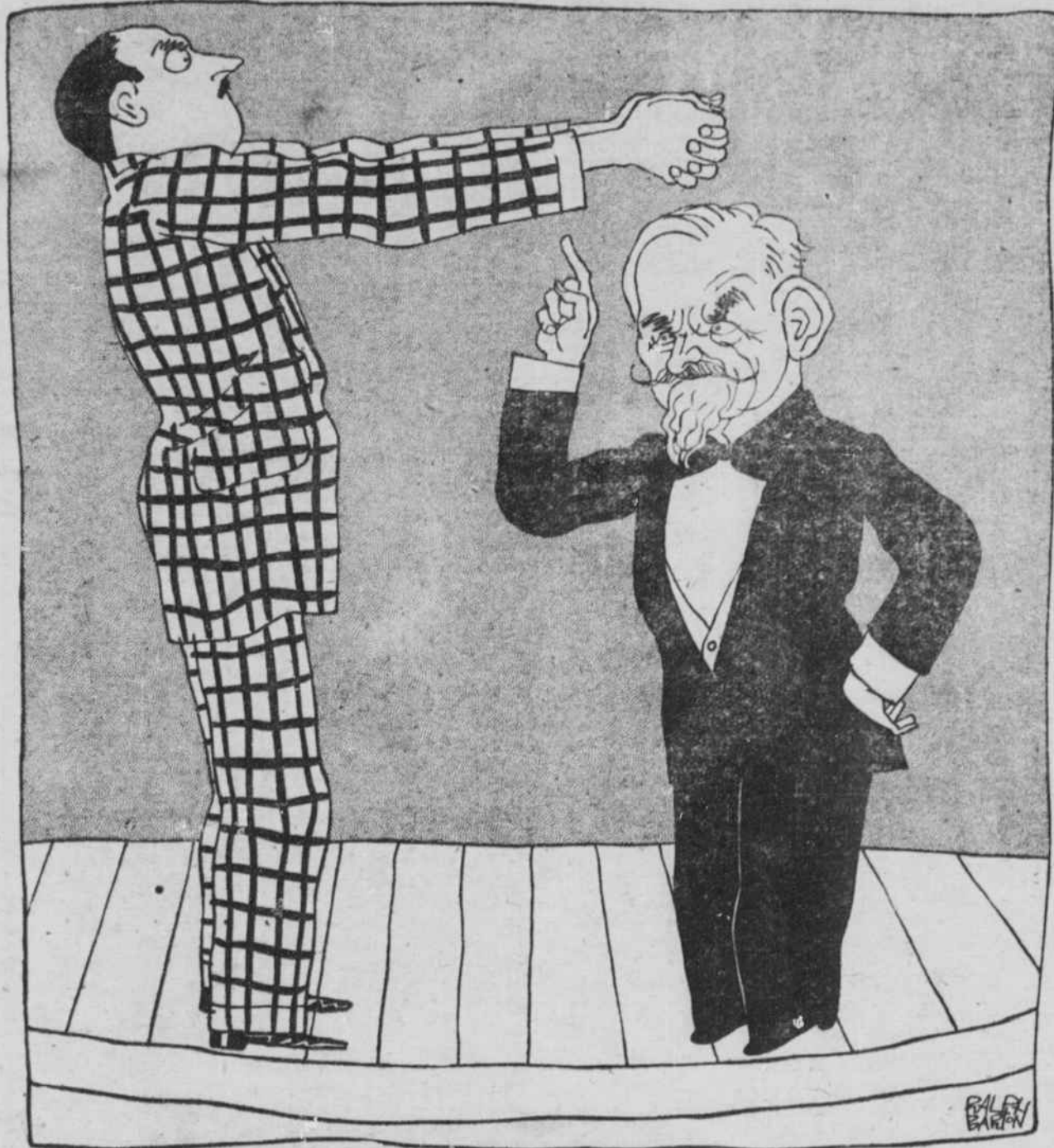


A Day With Coue in His Cure Shop



The patient clasps hands and presses palms together with increasing strength, repeating: "I cannot open them." M. Coue stands beside him, also repeating, "Cannot, cannot, cannot!"

I repeated "I cannot open them, cannot, cannot," but some joker at the back of my mind kept laughing in my ear and whispering: "You poor boob, you know darn well you can"

By GRANVILLE FORTESCUE

With Illustration by Ralph Barton

M. COUE is a visionist. As I sat in the cream-tinted lecture room of the Coue Institute in Grosvenor Gardens such was my first—and last—impression: His small, restless eyes see a world freed from all avoidable disease, the human race emancipated from these innumerable devastating ganglionic illusions that gain disastrous physical expression through the malfunctioning of amorphous minds. In a word, M. Coue aims to cure bad thinking. For, according to his doctrine, bad thinking is the corollary of bad health. When we all learn right thinking the mere doctors will be sure out of luck.

Before taking up the story of my individual impressions of M. Coue in action, let me try and reconstruct for you in a few words what to my mind is the mental process by which this visionary Frenchman arrived at his beliefs.

He is a chemist. While practicing his profession it became his daily duty to mortar and pestle the thousand and one tinctures, tonics and tabloids prescribed by the physicians. M. Coue knew his pharmacopoeia from asafetida to zinc blende. Daily he compounded pills and potions warranted to be panaceas for the ighly ill of the white, black, red,

yellow and brown races. The young pharmacist knew the drugs whereof his pills and potions were concocted contained no miraculous curative qualities. None knew better the pious frauds practiced by the "purse-mouthed physicians. Undoubtedly M. Coue soon discovered that sugar-coated pills prescribed with the correct bedside assurance were supposed to cure every ill from influenza to infantile paralysis. This, in this native idiom, gave M. Coue furiously to think.

Professor Osler, who I suspected practiced medicine largely with his tongue in his cheek, once stated in my presence that science could give with absolute accuracy the reactions of but four drugs. Two of these I remember as quinine and nuxvomica. The others I have forgotten. When this eminent professor of medicine thus limited his science no wonder the modest Nancy chemist learned to suspect the miraculous attributes assigned to the thousand and one best recipes for all ailments.

Out of his furious thinking M. Coue must have concluded it is not the bread pill or the bedside manner that

cures, but some unknown force within the patient himself. And he proceeded to address his attentions to this unknown force, which he identifies as the unconscious self.

For the moment I shall drop the unconscious self and give M. Coue his cue. Enter a small, unimpressive man, aged sixty, with obtruding ears. Conchlike, they bend forward, being quite out of proportion to the small head. Thin gray hair, a French trimmed beard, nicotine stained mustache, curiously wrinkled brows hiding small, inscrutable eyes, complete M. Coue's portrait. You have seen a thousand similar physiognomies among the large family of French hotel-keepers. A dinner jacket and black tie at this morning session emphasized this French hotelkeeper association.

Beyond these physical attributes M. Coue possesses an indefinable passiveness, a quality I remember possessed by the bonzes, of Japan.

Some sixty of us formed the audience of patients. Fifty females and ten males by actual count. Five of the men suffered some heritage of the war. Thirty of the women counted their forty-fifth birthdays

as fading reminiscences, two were in their late twenties and the rest scattering. All except one in a modish seal coat belonged to the middle stratum of the middle class.

The modish seal coat furnished the only discordant note during the performance; the rest of us were lamblike. She complained that she chewed her food to a spongy pulp, repeated the Coue formula every night and morning, "counting on my fingers, mind you," and after two weeks' strenuous trial was worse instead of better. Again she complained that M. Coue would not give her a private audience. Modish seal coat, to any impartial observer, sadly lacked self-control. She left in the middle of the demonstration.

Polite applause greeted M. Coue's entrance. He plunged at once into the exposition of his system. Modestly he disclaimed all extraordinary powers of healing. He was there to tell us how we could call on an inward, individual power, which if trained would heal all our ills, as far as healing was possible. It was all a matter of the right idea.

For example, the sufferer from hay fever, when the rose season approached, became infected with the idea he or she